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Possible Effects of Transfer of BI to CIA

State Dept. declassification & release instructions on file

BI is an integral part of the operations of the Department of State and the Foreign Service, not an adjunct. Even though BI as a division was created at the end of the last war, biographic files had for years heretofore been established and maintained by political desk officers and posts abroad. Biographic reporting is as old as the Foreign Service. The creation of BI was only an administrative action that became necessary as the operations of the Department and the Service became greater and specialization of functions was recognized as essential.

Biographic information is obtained primarily for political purposes - to assist in the conduct of international relations. The use of this data for purely intelligence and security purposes has developed and increased in importance in the cold war, but the political use of this information has and will continue to be its primary justification. The biographic information program was established at every mission abroad because "the personal equation is often a major, and sometimes, a dominant, factor in the formulation of policy and in the conduct of foreign relations. An intimate and complete knowledge of the persons who create, or participate in public affairs of foreign countries is an indispensable aid to understanding political conditions and to anticipating possible developments." (Foreign Service Manual, Vol. 4, 511.21).

Removal of BI out of the Department would unquestionably change the emphasis and direction of the program and consequently the value of this entire operation to the Department would suffer considerably. Today BI is conducted primarily to service the geographic bureaus, the Foreign Service posts, and the OIR divisions. Biographic reports and briefs are drafted to assist these units. The whole character of the collection, compilation, and production of biographic intelligence is for the primary purpose of assisting the aforementioned units of the Department. Intelligence needs of other agencies are secondary. If BI were incorporated in CIA, the nature and purpose of the operation both here and abroad would undoubtedly change to that of giving primary emphasis to intelligence needs. Conceivably the entire program in the field would change in character. Under present operations the political section of the mission, the political desk in the Department, and BI are all a close working unit. There is mutual independence and assistance. Under CIA direction this unity would fall apart. Undoubtedly the field program would disintegrate without the almost daily guidance, support and exhortation from a division within the Department. Conceivably biographic reporting would be turned over to CIA operators in the field. This would be a natural evolution if the center of operations in Washington were to be located in the Agency.

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An important factor to consider is that a close personal working relationship has been established between the political desk officers and the BI analysts. The desk officer's every wish is executed with top priority. Intelligence requests are given secondary treatment. Similarly OIR requests are given priority consideration to outside requests. BI is geared to the Department.

Working relationships with the Foreign Service are extremely close and often are the result of years of personal contact between the BI analysts and the officers in the field. This relationship has been strengthened by visits by the FSO's to BI before their departure and upon their return from their posts. Personal informal letters regarding the program are frequently exchanged. Biographic reports from the field are evaluated by BI. Often Foreign Service Officers are trained in BI prior to departure for their posts. This healthy relationship would suffer if not dissolve if BI were separated from the Department.

In addition to servicing the political officers, BI also contributes to other operations of the Department. Close working relationships have been established with SY in exchanging information on visa cases. Those in the Department engaged in public relations work and psychological warfare are also readily serviced by BI. This relationship and the character of the service would suffer as a result of any removal of BI out of the Department.

The new responsibility which the ICIS Report will place upon the Department is another strong argument against any severance of BI. This Report will presumably soon take the form of an NSC directive on "Eligibility of Representatives of Foreign Governments to Receive U.S. Government Classified Information". Although the emphasis of this operation as it affects BI is on the intelligence rather than the political side, it is significant that the report and the Directive were drafted by the ICIS after a study of the operation of the biographic information program in BI and in the field. If this program were to change and suffer by the transfer of BI, as heretofore discussed, the Department's responsibilities would accordingly be affected. In fact the NSC directive is a recognition at the highest level of the value of the material collected under the existing procedures which have taken years to perfect. The directive will give a new impetus to the entire biographic program. The brief being prepared on the NSC paper to be presented to the Undersecretary today plans for eight to ten officers in BI and fifteen officers in the field. Implementation of the NSC directive will necessarily mean new instructions to the field which will result in raising the priority of biographic reporting and thus increase the importance of the BI program. It should also mean new importance for BI within the Department as the interested bureaus and officers as well as other government agencies turn to us as the responsible division to make the necessary biographic checks within the terms of the directive. Under this new program BI should become more than ever an integral part of the Department.

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7. The source is going to CIA

I. Interdependence of the Foreign Service and BI in the conduct of the biographic program.

A. Biographic intelligence, systematically organized, is an important aid to the Foreign Service in reporting, negotiation, and representation activities. Accordingly, biographic intelligence reporting is regarded as an integral part of the regular reporting activities of Foreign Service posts. The Division of Biographic Information has been charged with the direction, coordination, and guidance of the Foreign Service in the collection of biographic information.

B. Within its substantive area (political, cultural, sociological) the Department is responsible for maintaining with the support of the Foreign Service a well-organized and complete biographic service to meet its own requirements.

C. To stimulate frank and full biographic reporting the Department has assured the Foreign Service that the confidence of the reporting officers will be respected. Consequently, Biographic Data Reports are ~~circulated~~ circulated on a "need to know" basis within the Department and receive no outside distribution. They, therefore, represent a source of biographic intelligence which is available only to the Department.

II. CIA's recognition of State's biographic responsibilities in its sphere of dominant interest.

In 1952 CIA conducted an extensive study of the biographic programs of the Department (BI) [REDACTED] and concluded that State,

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Because of the essential nature of the biographic function to the

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Department in its fields of dominant interest in carrying out its responsibilities under NSCID's 2 and 3, was the logical organization to be responsible within and to the intelligence community for biographic intelligence pertaining to foreign nationals in political, sociological and cultural fields.

In this connection the history of the various biographic units which have been organized since 1942 may be of interest.

- 1942 Biographical Records Section (BR) established in OSS.
- 1943 First centralized biographic unit established in State under the Division of World Trade Intelligence, later known as the Division of Economic Security Controls. Of especial interest is the fact that State recognized its need for such a unit even though it had complete access to OSS/BR.
- 1945-46 State, recognizing the value of the biographic program, merged the biographic units of OSS and State into the Division of Biographic Information.
- 1946-47 Who's Who Branch of G-2 abolished and its files on all non-military figures turned over to BI.

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III. Interdependence of the Regional Bureaus and BI.

A. A Survey conducted in 1952 by a team of management engineers revealed that "The Biographic Division is both widely used and praised at all levels in Regional Bureaus". It is a matter of record that the "Department must have factual data and evaluations concerning foreign nationals because of the influence of such persons in national and international affairs and the effect which their activities may have on the relations of their countries with the United States and with other nations. Biographic information is also needed for the briefing of United States representatives to international organizations and conferences, and for background in connection with the visits to the United States of important foreigners." In turn BI is dependent upon the Regional Bureaus for first-hand impressions of foreigners gathered by political officers in their negotiations with representatives of foreign governments. Such impressions are made available to BI in memos of conversation or personal interviews. The Regional Bureaus are also of assistance to BI in providing guidance as to the Department's biographic needs and in supporting BI requirements placed on missions abroad.

IV. Advantages of an overt as opposed to a covert operation.

As an overt organization the Department is in a position to enjoy more freedom of action than is the case with a covert organization such as CIA. To cite two examples: (1) BI's analysts are at liberty to discuss biographic matters with their opposite numbers throughout

25X1 the government,

(2) BI

25X1 personnel, with the knowledge and consent of the Regional Bureaus,
can contact certain foreign embassies and legations for information;

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